

Member Communication Experience

When Construction Backlog Thins, Fast Project Starts Win

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Backlog is the value of contracted work not yet performed; when that number drops, firms cannot afford slow, disorganized project starts. Owners who are releasing work cautiously are looking for delivery teams that can move from “award” to “active project” with minimal friction.

Fast-starting project teams share several information traits:

- » Contracts, contacts, teams, permissions, and document control are set up in hours, not weeks, because information does not have to be assembled from scattered repositories and inboxes.
- » External collaborators — designers, construction managers, key trade partners — receive controlled access to current documents and communications without license complications or ad hoc filesharing workarounds.
- » RFIs, submittals, and coordination items flow through repeatable, documented processes from day one, rather than being improvised on each project.

In this environment, project information is not an afterthought; it is part of the firm’s value proposition. A team that can demonstrate a clear, tested way of organizing communication and documents before the first shovel hits the ground sends a strong signal to owners that the project will be managed with discipline.

BACKLOG IS DOWN, RELATIONSHIP WORK IS UP

When there is less work to go around, selection often hinges on



trust and ease of doing business as much as on price. Owners, construction managers, designers, and trade partners gravitate toward partners who make collaboration straightforward, transparent, and predictable.

Information management plays directly into that perception:

- » Sharing information cleanly and securely, without forcing partners into unfamiliar systems or paid licenses, reduces friction and lowers the barrier to collaboration.
- » Fewer surprises, clearer records, and faster responses on live projects create confidence that issues will be resolved without drama, which is exactly the experience owners remember when considering the next award.

- » Consistent, predictable information habits across jobs
 - how RFIs are logged, how revisions are issued, how decisions are documented — make architects, engineers, and key trade partners more likely to seek out the same team when opportunities are scarce.

In other words, every active project doubles as a reference project. The way information is handled today shapes whether a firm is invited back tomorrow, which in turn determines how quickly backlog recovers.

PROJECT INFORMATION AS A GROWTH ENGINE, NOT A BACK OFFICE TASK

Treating project information solely as compliance or record keeping leaves value on the table. When firms instead design information workflows with fast starts and strong relationships in mind, the same practices that keep projects on track also support new business.

Several elements are key:

- » **A connected project environment.** Integrating existing email systems and file repositories into a single project space allows teams to pull together the right people, documents, and communication threads immediately after award.
- » **Standardized workflows for core processes.** Defined paths for RFIs, submittals, reviews, and jobsite issues help new projects start on a stable footing and give partners a familiar experience from one job to the next.
- » **Simple, secure external collaboration.** Configurable access for owners, designers, and trade partners means collaboration can begin without lengthy onboarding or custom IT work, which is particularly valuable when projects release on short notice.

One project information management platform used across the architecture, engineering, construction, and owner community, for example, connects to common email and document systems, consolidates project communication and files, and provides standardized, role-based workflows for RFIs, submittals, and external sharing. Firms using this kind of approach can activate new projects quickly and offer a smoother collaboration experience, which improves both immediate delivery and long-term win potential.

REBUILDING BACKLOG BY BEING THE BEST PARTNER

Backlog will continue to respond to interest rates, owner confidence, and broader economic conditions. What firms can control is how ready they are when opportunities do appear and how strongly current partners want them on the next team.

Contractors that invest in fast start information workflows and low friction collaboration are not just making projects more efficient. They are also making themselves the obvious choice when cautious owners finally release a project, when a trusted architect recommends a contractor, or when a construction manager builds a shortlist under tight timelines. In a period of thin backlog, that combination — rapid mobilization and relationship-driven repeat work — can be the difference between waiting for the phone to ring and proactively rebuilding a healthy pipeline of revenue. 



About the Author

Dave Wagner is vice president of product marketing for [Newforma](#), the leader in project and information management for the AECO industry. He is a seasoned product marketing leader with a deep understanding of how to position complex solutions for real-world use. With a career rooted in AECO, he has helped shape how software connects design, construction, and operations teams.

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